

**MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2006
SPECIAL SESSION
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL**

A special meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:30 AM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present. The Selectmen convened a public hearing to discuss the application of Verizon for a proposed cable television license in Belmont.

Appearing before the Board were the Town's attorney Peter Epstein, Cable Television Advisory Committee (CTAC) Chair Jonathan Green, and representatives from Verizon.

Chairman Solomon began by reading a statement explaining that this hearing is required under federal law and that notice of the hearing was posted in the local newspaper for two consecutive weeks. The Board called for the hearing after the CTAC indicated that a draft agreement had been reached. The Town's only current cable television provider is Comcast.

Verizon introduced Jim McGrail, a consultant, Peter Bowman, Vice President of External Affairs, and Tom Antonucci, Verizon's legal counsel.

Mr. Bowman stated that Verizon can begin offering service within weeks of a license being granted. The company has over 14,000 employees in Massachusetts including a number of Belmont residents. Verizon will provide cable services through its high quality fiber-optic network.

CTAC member Richard Pew asked how Verizon would support a cable TV operation in Belmont. Mr. Bowman explained that service requests will be handled by Verizon's Andover office which houses several hundred service representatives. The company will use the same front-line workers that are already working in the Belmont area delivering Verizon's other services and are familiar with the Town.

Mr. Green asked for further details about Verizon's financing and ability to support expenditures on Belmont, its plans for handling the distinct needs of cable customer service, and technical aspects of its plan for providing video service.

Mr. Bowman said that Verizon's video head office for Massachusetts is in Burlington. A signal would travel from there over fiber optic cable to the Belmont central office and then over the fiber network to the home. When a customer orders service, Verizon will run fiber directly to their home. There are customers in Belmont who currently receive

Verizon data services through this fiber network and the same network will carry the cable signals.

Mr. Epstein noted that the issue of service availability timing was an important issue in the negotiations and asked if Verizon could specifically address this issue. Mr. McGrail responded that Verizon's buildout is in three categories – aerial (wires), underground, and multiple dwelling units (more than 3 units). 89% of Belmont is served aurally and Verizon will be able to serve these people on day 1. Most cable companies require 18 months before they can provide service to anyone in a new town. Under the contract, Verizon will be required to fully complete the build-out to 100% of Belmont homes within 3 years.

CTAC member Barry Blesser asked about direct customer service contacts. Mr. Bowman said that Verizon will send its technicians to the home to provide services. There will also be a franchise manager assigned to Belmont who will continue to work with the Town to ensure satisfaction. As a second provider in Town, Verizon knows it will need to provide superb customer service and that includes flexibility in scheduling service appointments.

CTA member Janet Geggis noted that seniors like to be able to go to an office in person to pay bills and present service issues. She asked when Verizon will have an office in Belmont or a nearby town?

Mr. McGrail responded that the company will have a bill payment office in the Town of Belmont and will make further determinations about locating customer service offices after determining where customers are located.

Resident Arthur MacLeod said that Verizon's phone service has been down 4 to 5 times a year because of antiquated wiring. Will the fiber optic cable service be more reliable?

Mr. Bowman said Verizon will work with Mr. MacLeod on his specific issues, but the fiber network is a more reliable and robust network.

Resident Geraldine Cummings asked if she has Verizon wireless and land phone services, will she get a discount on cable TV? Mr. Bowman replied that bundling of services is a major trend in the industry. Verizon will offer voice, data, wireless, and video. Customers can get any combination of basic and enhanced services, and bundled packages will be priced competitively.

Resident Tom Clark asked if a customer already has Verizon FIOS, what would the time frame be for cable TV service and would there be a need to purchase additional equipment? Mr. Bowman said Verizon could begin video services within weeks, only a set top box would be needed and there would be no additional wiring needed.

Resident Priscilla Clark said that her family has had Verizon services for 3 years and they are courteous, prompt, and answered all their questions. She said they are eager to receive Verizon cable TV service.

Resident Myles Calvey spoke on behalf of the union technicians and workers that work for Verizon in the area. He said Verizon has gone above and beyond the standard in providing jobs in this area. There will be over 60 new jobs in the area for customer service. Mr. Calvey said he has worked for Verizon for 38 years and their commitment is to keeping customers. The workers understand that if people are not happy they will leave Verizon and that is not good for Verizon or its workers. Currently the company has technicians based in Watertown and Woburn. The local union chapter represents 4,000 members over 22 square miles. Mr. Calvey said he can vouch that the fiber network is high quality. On behalf of the local union members he urged the Board to approve the license.

Selectman Firenze asked if Verizon has to dig up the street to install underground wire, what will be done about the newly paved roads in Town?

Mr. Bowman said Verizon will work with the DPW to coordinate any street openings. If digging is necessary, Verizon will restore the road to the Town's complete satisfaction. The company will lay out a plan to get all the underground work done as soon as possible.

Mr. Green said that the CTAC as a whole supports the current draft agreement. Individual members may have concerns on different issues, but as a whole there are no outstanding issues.

Chairman Solomon said that the Board has the information it needs and expects to execute a 10-year license to provide cable services and issue a written statement with its reasons for approving such.

The hearing was closed at 8:18 AM.

The Board proceeded to discuss the approval of the license.

The Board moved: to approve the Verizon cable TV license application and sign the license.

Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board signed 5 copies of the license agreement.

Chairman Solomon announced that Ron Lunt has submitted his resignation as Belmont Municipal Light Department manager due to serious medical issues within his family. He is taking a position as utilities manager in Dover, Delaware so that his wife can live closer to their grandchild as they deal with her medical condition. His resignation will be effective November 27, 2006. He has recommended Tim Richardson as his successor.

The Board noted that it cannot discuss the matter officially since it is not convened as the Light Board. The Board proposed to meet as the Light Board on October 17, 2006 at 5:30

PM (this has changed since the original meeting) prior to its regular meeting scheduled for 6:00 PM.

The Board adjourned at 8:36 AM.

Thomas G. Younger
Town Administrator